

*** TRANSCRIPT ***

Getting down to funny business

Podcast interview with Glynnes Pruett, owner of Comic Book Hideout; and Janelle Kozyra, member of the Kimco blogging team

Janelle: Greetings, everyone. I'm Janelle Kozyra, a member of Kimco's blogging team. Today we have with us one of Kimco's first KEYS tenants, Glynnes Pruett, who is the owner and operator of Comic Book Hideout in Fullerton, Calif. Glynnes just opened up Comic Book Hideout, so congratulations, Glynnes. It's nice to have you with us today.

Glynnes: Thank you. My name is Glynnes Pruett and I'm in Fullerton, Calif., like you said. And we have been open now for one week and two days.

Janelle: Great. And what shopping center are you open in?

Glynnes: I am in the Fullerton Town Center in Fullerton, Calif., off of the 91 freeway on Lemon and Orangethorpe near the AMC Theater.

Janelle: So give us an overview of Comic Book Hideout for all of our listeners.

Glynnes: Well, Comic Book Hideout is not your typical comic book store. Most people that go to a comic book store, it feels like you're going into somebody's basement. It's usually plain and white, and a little dark, and probably smells not as fresh, and there's comic books splattered around here and there.

And my store is much more homey, comfortable, warm, and inviting. I'm encouraging people to kind of establish a community and a friendly place where they can go and be themselves and get the things that they like, and talk about the things that they're interested in. And so they develop a sort of community where people can hang out, play games, watch movies, have events, and buy comic books.

Janelle: What sparked your business idea?

Glynnes: Well, I had been selling comic books with my father since I was a little girl when we moved from Georgia to California. My dad started getting into selling at trade shows like Comic-Con and little shows where people bring comic books and toys and things like that. And we started doing that when I was six.

So when I was a little girl, it was my dad's dream as well as my own that one day we'll have our own store. It'll be cooler than everybody else's store and it will have all the stuff that we like and all the stuff that everyone else will like. And so we would go around to the shopping centers to go eat somewhere, and we'd see a movie and we'd see an empty building and go, "Oh, look, there's our comic store!" and describe it to each other, and think of all the cool ideas we could do with it and then how we could make it special and unique.

And so growing up, I would figure once I'm done with all my adventures and I've been all around the world and I've done everything I've wanted to do and I'm ready to settle down, I'll finally own my own comic book store. And then I turned 25 and realized, oh, wow, there's no better time than now. I'd rather do something when I'm young and spunky enough and have enough time and energy to devote wholeheartedly into something.

And so I just set my mind to it, and said, this is what I want to do. Within six months of officially deciding, OK, I want to open my own store, I have a Kimco KEYS program and got all my paperwork together and did all the business prep stuff and made it happen, and I couldn't be happier.

Janelle: And how did you hear about the KEYS program?

Glynnes: I had been working closely with the Small Business Development Center here in Long Beach, and I had a couple really good advisors who I'd been working with developing my business plan and just making sure that I had done all of the steps of starting up a small business—which is much more complicated than people think it is.

And they actually brought it to my attention that Kimco, this huge realty company, was doing a program for first-time entrepreneurs and small business owners. I was like, oh, that's me. My hand sprung up and I was like, "Yes, this sounds excellent." And so I went over some of the paperwork that they had given me and I found the perfect spot.

They gave me a bunch of different papers that said different locations that Kimco had ownership of, and I found one in the Fullerton Town Center. And Fullerton was my ideal location where I had been looking to start my store anyway. And so I said, "Oh my gosh, this is perfect. There's no better place than right here."

And so since I got that opportunity from the KEYS program, I was super, super excited. So I might have been a little bit too excited because I didn't anticipate that with a huge real estate company, you have to go through many different people and do paperwork, and you don't just walk in and shake hands and get the keys.

So I had to be very patient, which is a good trial for me because I'm not a very patient person. I get really excited about something and just want to get it done right away. But the KEYS program definitely helped me develop my patience for corporate business. So I applied to the program and they liked my idea. They liked the numbers and the business plan I had come up with.

I had met with some people to look at the properties, and there were a couple different locations in the Town Center that I wanted. And so I negotiated with them and tried to get the one that was best, and that doesn't always work out, but Kimco was definitely trying to accommodate me and what I wanted.

When I finally got the keys and got into the space that I have now, I had to put a lot of work into fixing it up and what-not. But I'm very, very happy with my location now and hopefully will be here for a long time.

Janelle: What do you hope to get out of the KEYS program?

Glynnes: Well, the KEYS program, what it is for me is kind of a nice safety net. As a startup business, you're not expected to make any profit for the first couple of years that you're in business because of the startup costs, overhead, and getting people to get into your area and to realize that you're there and understand that you're the best at what you do.

So for me, the Kimco KEYS program is just to help me have a little leeway in the time that it takes for me to get set up. So with the rent discount that I'm getting for the property that I'm in right now, I can in the next year establish how much money I'm making at my business, what are my expenses, and figure out the numbers and what I need to stay afloat and what I need to be successful.

So the KEYS program is really, really helpful for me, just to kind of get a handle on my own financial security as a business, making sure that I'm not getting in over my head, and everything I take on is something I can handle financially. And for me that's a huge, huge safety net and back bracer, a little support network that I can use to establish my business because I want it to be the best that it can be.

Janelle: Why do you think that Fullerton, Calif., is the ideal location for your business?

Glynnes: Fullerton, Calif., in Orange County is a college town and the area itself is very hip and cool. It's a college town, but there are a lot of young people that are either in school or out of school, people stick around and start families.

There are a couple places in Orange County that are like little pockets of geek culture, which is what my store is completely dedicated to. And I've lived in Fullerton for a long time and I really enjoy the area. It's like the people are kind of on the same wavelength.

Janelle: What would you want your potential customers to know the most about Comic Book Hideout?

Glynnes: My store specializes in "indie weirdness." It's stuff you wouldn't be able to find necessarily anywhere else. We have a ton of superhero stuff. But I also have small-press stuff, indie stuff, and cool writers and artists that you wouldn't necessarily be introduced to in another store.

Based on my own personal knowledge and what I've read and what I think is pretty awesome, I can help direct people to maybe experience something that they didn't know existed before. So people come in and they think of comic books as Superman and Batman and X-Men.

But they can come into my store and I can introduce them to some Alan Moore work or some cool artists that they've never heard of before that are old or new or upcoming. That gives them an opportunity to find something new and fresh every time they come in. See, now I'm talking geek-speak and I'm going to lose you!

Janelle: So tell us how your grand opening went, Glynnes. I understand that was on Nov. 10. So what did you have to offer all of your customers?

Glynnes: Saturday, Nov. 10 was our grand opening, as you said, and it was a much-anticipated opening because I had people excited about opening my store. I went to Comic-Con in the summer and was hoping that I would be opened by the end of September.

I was not open by the end of September, obviously, and so I had a lot of people that were eagerly waiting for me to get the doors open because they knew what I had to offer based on shows that I had done and the comics that I had exposed them to when I had met them at Comic-Con or Wizard World or Comikaze.

And so the 10th, I opened the doors at 10 a.m., and I had music and games and things going on throughout the day. And then at 4:00 or 5:00, I had Gorilla Tacos from my friend from L.A. He's a gourmet sous chef and makes fantastic tacos.

I had an awesome D.J. I'm the sponsor for the Los Angeles Dumbledore's Army, which is the Los Angeles adult Harry Potter fan group, and they came and did trivia questions and prizes. And I had a bunch of all of my stuff ready to go and shiny and pretty for everyone to look at. I have three different arcade games in the location. And also just a fresh face in the comic book world for people to come and get excited about.

So I think total we had nearly 300 people show up to the grand opening. Thank goodness the fire marshal didn't come out and see. He would not have been very happy. But I had people filling out the back and the front and everyone seemed to be having an amazing time. I had made nearly double my goal I was looking to make in sales for the grand opening, and every person that came in was so excited and happy to see that such a place existed.

That's really what I got out of it, was the feeling that people were really stoked that I'd opened my store, that I opened up in Fullerton, and that they had a place to go and they knew that they could get the cool stuff they were looking for and the stuff that they weren't looking for that they didn't even know they liked yet.

So I had a fantastically successful grand opening and made a teary-eyed speech and everything. And it was wonderful. I couldn't have asked for anything more.

Janelle: Well, Glynnes, it sounds like you are off and running with Comic Book Hideout, so congrats again on the grand opening and best of luck to you with everything.

Glynnes: Awesome. Thank you very much.

Janelle: Thanks for taking some time out with us.

Glynnes: Of course. And thanks for the Kimco KEYS program because I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for them.